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INSIDER AND OUTSIDER PERSPECTIVES: THE EARLIEST LITERARY MODELS OF AMIR TIMUR IN UZBEK AND RUSSIAN TRADITIONS (ORAL EPIC AND MEDIEVAL WRITTEN SOURCES)

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Amir Timur belongs to those historical figures who exert a long-term influence on the formation of national self-awareness. Such images enter a people's collective memory through written sources, epic, folklore and fiction, and each epoch rereads them through the prism of its own questions. It is at the oral-epic and medieval written stages that the initial models of artistic interpretation are laid down, models that are subsequently reproduced, transformed and reinterpreted over the centuries.

The relevance of the study lies in the fact that the image of Amir Timur in Uzbek and Russian literature took shape from fundamentally different cultural perspectives – internal and external – and a comparison of these perspectives has not yet received a systematic typological description. The aim of the article is to reconstruct both initial models of representing the image and to show that their character is not accidental but systemic, determining the further evolution of the image in the literature of subsequent epochs.

The research material comprises medieval written literature (Alisher Navoi's works Majolis un-nafois, Tarixi muluki Ajam, Khamsa and Muhokamat ul-lughatayn), the Old Russian Tale of Temir Aksak in the redactions presented in the Library of Literature

of Ancient Rus' and in chronicle compilations, as well as the Uzbek oral-epic heritage collected and published by H. Sodikov and other collectors. Later material is also drawn upon – S. Borodin's trilogy Stars over Samarkand, which demonstrates the persistence of the Russian medieval stereotype.

The methodological basis of the work consists of comparative-typological and imagological approaches together with the theory of cultural memory. The comparative-typological method makes it possible to identify stable models of representing the image and to compare the treatment of the same biographical motifs in the two traditions. The imagological approach reveals the mechanism by which the image of «one's own» and of the «alien» ruler is formed, conditioned by the observer's internal or external cultural perspective. The concept of cultural memory provides grounds for considering the literary image of Timur not as a reflection of historical truth but as the result of different strategies of collective remembering. The analytical procedure included singling out the key motifs (lameness, youth, the nature of power, attitude towards the people), comparing them in the Uzbek and Russian traditions and interpreting the divergences identified.

The Uzbek Tradition: An Internal Model of Perception. In the medieval written tradition of Uzbek culture, the image of Amir Timur is formed primarily in the context of notions of the ideal ruler and patron of spiritual life. The outstanding 15th-century thinker and poet Alisher Navoi repeatedly turned to the name of the great commander, emphasising his significance as a sovereign and patron of Turkic culture. In the biographical anthology Majolis un-nafois, Navoi praises Timur's knowledge of poetry and prose and his ability to quote them appropriately[1]; in the historical work Tarixi muluki Ajam he highlights his military achievements and the administrative reforms thanks to which the state gained stability. In a poem from the Khamsa cycle, Timur is presented as an example of a wise and just ruler[2], and in the treatise Muhokamat ul-lughatayn Navoi stresses the role of Timur and his circle in elevating the Turkic language, which was used at court on a par with Persian[3]. Already in this literature the themes are laid down that will regain their force in the poetry of the 20th–21st centuries: will, spiritual resilience, and responsibility before the people and history.

Alongside the written tradition, folk art – legends, dastans and traditions – played an important role. While written sources consolidated the official interpretation of the ruler-patron, the oral tradition enriched the image with vivid details, miraculous motifs and edifying plots. The main centre where such plots took shape was Samarkand, where the image of the Sahibqiran – the «lord of the four corners of the world» – was formed. A special place belongs to Hamdam Sodikov's collection Amir Temur hayotidagi g'aroyibotlar («Wonders in the Life of Amir Timur», 2007), which brings together legendary and mythological material about omens connected with Timur's life path[4]. Revealing is the plot of the «two suns» that allegedly rose over the camp during the Battle of Ankara: popular imagination endowed Timur with an aura of chosenness even before the historical image had finally taken shape.

The legend «Maktabdorning bashorati» («The Teacher's Prophecy») is characteristic. The future ruler's mother, Takina Begim, notices a rare ability in her son – he uses both hands with equal confidence. Mullah Alibek interprets this as a sign from above: such a person will rule from east to west [5]. The ability to write with both hands is symbolically equated with «dual power» – the ruler's capacity to wield the sword and the pen equally well. The legend ends with a sheikh's advice to raise the boy so that he reads the Qur'an and masters weapons, which reinforces an idea characteristic of Uzbek culture: the ideal ruler must combine religious and secular upbringing. Structurally, the legend follows a typical folklore logic: prophecy → symbolic sign → dialogue of mentors → inevitable fulfilment of destiny.

In the popular mind the ability to write with both hands acquires a wider symbolic dimension: the «two-handed person» becomes the image of a universal ruler endowed with exceptional gifts – it is no accident that the legend brings Timur close to outstanding historical figures who possessed a similar trait. The polyphony of the plot (the mother's observation – the father's question – the mullah's explanation – the sheikh's instruction) heightens the effect of authenticity and of involvement in a family dialogue; every detail carries symbolic weight, and the episode itself is built as a «laconic myth» in which the hero's entire future destiny is concentrated in a few brief scenes. Such a structure recurs in legends about many heroes – from biblical kings to epic bogatyrs – but in the Uzbek tradition it consolidates

[1] Алишер Навоий. Мажолис ун-нафоис. Еттинчи мажлис: Темур Кўрагон Электрон ресурс. – Электрон PDF нусха. – Б. 93. – URL: https://f.lib.dipuni.uz/Adabiyot/Alisher%20Navoiy.%20Majolisun-nafois.pdf (мурожаат санаси: 03.11.2026).

[2] Алишер Навоий. Хамса // Мукаммал асарлар тўплами: 20 жилдлик. – Тошкент: Фан, 1991.

[3] Алишер Навоий. Муҳокамат ул-луғатайн // Мукаммал асарлар тўплами: 20 жилдлик. – Тошкент: Фан, 1987–2003.

[4] Содиқов Ҳ. Амир Темур ҳаётидаги ғаройиботлар: тарихий бадиалар. – Тошкент: ART FLEX, 2007. – Б. 3–5.

[5] Содиқов Ҳ. Амир Темур ҳаётидаги ғаройиботлар: тарихий бадиалар. – Тошкент: ART FLEX, 2007. – Б. 20.

the stable image of a ruler whose power is sanctified and foretold even before his birth.

Another plot from Sodikov's collection is the legend «Yo'lbars bilan yuzma-yuz» («Face to Face with the Tiger»). Amir Timur, dressed in a poor man's clothes, sets off as a pilgrim to the tomb of Ahmad Yasawi in order to hear the living speech of the people and learn their needs[1]. The motif of the «secret round» links the legend with Eastern and world tradition – from Harun al-Rashid in the Thousand and One Nights to the tales of King Arthur. The climax is the hunting scene: having heard from a shepherd about a tiger troubling the herds, Timur goes out against the beast himself and strikes it with a spear, crying «Allahu akbar!» The victory over the tiger becomes symbolic proof that the ruler relies both on his own skill and on God's help, while the support of the people multiplies his strength. Thus the Uzbek tradition – both written and oral – interprets any biographical detail as a sign of chosenness.

The Russian Tradition: An External Model of Perception. A different model develops in Old Russian bookmanship, where the figure of Timur is comprehended from the position of an external observer and incorporated into a system of religious-apocalyptic notions. Its basis was the Tale of Temir Aksak (late 14th – mid-15th century), which tells of Timur's campaign against Rus' in 1395[2]. Rus', weary of the Horde yoke, perceived the rumours about the conqueror as news of a «new Batu» – a threat in almost apocalyptic form. Already the episode of his youth constructs the image through the motif of moral degradation: the young Timur, driven by hunger, stole a sheep, was caught and cruelly beaten, and his leg was broken; having recovered, he «перекова себѣ желѣзомъ ногу свою перебитую» («bound his broken leg with iron») – hence the nickname Temir Aksak, «the Iron Lame One» [3].

In the Old Russian context this episode serves the function of belittlement. Whereas Uzbek legends fill Timur's youth with prophecies of greatness, the Russian chronicle begins with the «base» – theft and disgrace. Lameness here is not a sign of chosenness (like the battle wound in the Uzbek tradition) but the brand of a robber. After the episode of his youth, the Tale moves on to the events of 1395: Timur's victory over Khan Tokhtamysh is perceived as the replacement of one threat by another, even more formidable one, and the direct comparison with Batu turns the conqueror into an apocalyptic figure. At the same time, consolation shows through the fear: if Rus' survived Batu, it will survive Timur too. History turns into a theological lesson in which the conqueror is not an independent force but an instrument of divine providence.

The culmination of the Tale is the miracle of the Vladimir Icon. The Tale dates the departure of the icon from Vladimir to 15 August 1395; its arrival in Moscow is commemorated on 26 August. Muscovites meet the icon with a procession of prayer, and Timur turns his army back. The salvation of the city is explained not by military force but by intercession from above [4]. Here the image of Timur is finally deprived of historical agency: he came not of his own will (God permitted it for the people's sins) and left not of his own will (God turned him away in answer to prayer). Whereas in the Uzbek tradition Timur is an active maker of history, in the Russian Tale he is a figure in someone else's drama, where the leading roles belong to God and the Mother of God.

The Tale of Temir Aksak combines chronicle documentary quality with the poetics of legend. In its two known redactions – of the 15th and 16th centuries – the chronicle structure is preserved: descriptions of campaigns, battles and diplomatic missions are arranged linearly, without psychological digressions, which brings the work close to an official chronicle. Researchers note the characteristic simplicity of the language, the predominance of verbal constructions («шёл», «брал», «строил» – «went», «took», «built»), formulaic epithets («железный Тимур», «iron Timur»), and the rhythmic quality of the narration, which creates the impression of an oral tale[5]. It is precisely this dry, almost businesslike manner that gives the text the appearance of an official document in which each campaign is interpreted as a sign of higher justice. In the 14th century the Tale performed a dual function: it preserved the memory of real events and at the same time formed the image of a formidable conqueror bringing destruction as a manifestation of divine retribution.

The model established in the Tale proved extremely tenacious. Even in the mid-20th century, Russian literature reproduced the motif of a «robber's

[1] Содиқов Ҳ. Амир Темур ҳаётидаги ғаройиботлар: Тарихий бадиалар. – Тошкент: ART FLEX, 2007. – 320 б.

[2] Повесть о Темир Аксаке / Подготовка текста, перевод и комментарии В. В. Колесова // Библиотека литературы Древней Руси / Под ред. Д. С. Лихачёва и др. – СПб.: Наука, 1999. – Т. 6: XIV – середина XV века. – С. 230–235.

[3] Повесть о Темир Аксаке / Подготовка текста, перевод и комментарии В. В. Колесова // Библиотека литературы Древней Руси / Под ред. Д. С. Лихачёва и др. – СПб.: Наука, 1999. – Т. 6: XIV – середина XV века. – С. 232.

[4] Повесть о Темир Аксаке / Подготовка текста, перевод и комментарии В. В. Колесова // Библиотека литературы Древней Руси / Под ред. Д. С. Лихачёва и др. – СПб.: Наука, 1999. – Т. 6: XIV – середина XV века. – С. 236–239.

[5] Иванов П. П. Повесть о Темир Аксаке // Средневековые тексты Востока. – М.: Наука, 2008. – С. 40–56.

past»: S. Borodin's trilogy Stars over Samarkand (1953–1971) opens with the book Lame Timur, bearing an epigraph from the Nikon Chronicle that documents the author's reliance on the medieval tradition[1]. The Uzbek scholar Z. J. Pardayeva rightly notes that Borodin reduces Timur's historical personality «с уровня искусного полководца, великого Сахибкирана до обычного разбойника» («from the level of a skilful commander, the great Sahibqiran, to that of an ordinary robber»)[2]. Thus the «robber» stereotype formed in the 14th century remained stable in Russian cultural consciousness right up to the 20th century, and only by the late 20th – early 21st century did Russian literature move towards a more balanced assessment.

The key difference between the two traditions is rooted in the cultural perspective of perception. For the Uzbek tradition Timur is «one's own», an organic part of national identity; he requires no justification and appears as a symbol of statehood, justice and the cultural flourishing of the Timurid era. For the Russian tradition Timur is «alien», an object of fear comprehended through the prism of the community's own security; his campaign becomes a trial of faith, and the salvation of Moscow a religious miracle. This difference is clearly manifested in the treatment of the same motifs (Table 1).

Table 1. Interpretation of key motifs of Amir Timur's image in the two traditions

Motif	Uzbek tradition	Russian tradition
Lameness	Sign of chosenness, symbol of courage (battle wound)	Punishment for theft, a mark of disgrace
Youth	Prophecy of greatness, ambidexterity, signs of destiny	Theft of a sheep, a robber's past
Power	Justice, patronage of the people	Formidable force, divine punishment
Attitude towards the people	Disguise to communicate with the people, care for their needs	Conqueror, threat

One and the same biographical fact – lameness – receives diametrically opposite interpretations: in the Uzbek tradition it is a sign of courage, in the Russian one the brand of a robber. The functions of the image also differ. In Uzbek culture the image of Timur plays a consolidating role, uniting the people around the idea of statehood and cultural continuity; the legends about him serve as a moral guide. In Russian culture the image functions as a trial that helps the people become aware of their own spiritual strength: deliverance from the invasion becomes proof of Rus' being under divine protection.

The continuity of the traditions differs as well. The Uzbek tradition, originating with Navoi and the oral epic, laid a positive foundation that has been preserved throughout the history of the literature: the image remains heroic, only the emphases change – from patron of culture to symbol of national awakening, from statesman to spiritual guide. The Russian tradition, by contrast, consolidated a negative stereotype, whose persistence is demonstrated by Borodin in the 20th century.

Already at the stage of the oral-epic and medieval written tradition, two fundamentally different typological models of the artistic representation of Amir Timur's image take shape. In Uzbek culture the internal model predominates, within which Timur is understood as a chosen ruler, the bearer of a creative mission, and a symbol of statehood and cultural patronage. In Russian medieval literature an external model develops, based on motifs of threat, divine trial and a religious-apocalyptic interpretation of events.

These divergences are not accidental but systemic: they reflect not so much different historical truths as different strategies of cultural memory. Uzbek literature views Timur from within national experience, Russian literature from outside, through the prism of its own historical destiny. It is these initial models that set the trajectory of the image's further evolution – positively stable in the Uzbek tradition and gradually evolving from a negative towards a more balanced interpretation in Russian literature.

As a prospect for further research, it appears expedient to trace the transformation of both models in the literature of the 20th–21st centuries: the reinter-

[1] Бородин С. П. Звёзды над Самаркандом: трилогия. Кн. 1: Хромой Тимур. – Ташкент: Узбекистан, 1981. – 320 с.

[2] Пардаева З. Ж. Художественно-типологическая интерпретация исторических героев в русской и русскоязычной литературе Узбекистана: автореф. дис. … канд. филол. наук. – Ташкент, 1995. – 24 с.

pretation of Timur's image in Jadid poetry and in the prose of independent Uzbekistan, on the one hand, and the gradual overcoming of the negative stereotype in Russian literature, on the other. A comparative study of Timur's image in other national traditions is also a productive direction, as it would make it possible to refine the typology of the internal and external perspectives of artistic memory.

Resume. The article examines the formation of Amir Timur's literary image in Uzbek and Russian literature through a comparative analysis of oral epic traditions and medieval written texts. The study draws on Alisher Navoi's works, the Old Russian Tale of Temir-Aksak, and Uzbek folk legends published by H. Sodiqov and other collectors. By combining comparative typology, imagology, and cultural memory studies, the author identifies two distinct models of representing Timur. In the Uzbek tradition, he is portrayed as a ruler chosen by fate, a patron of science and the arts, and a symbol of statehood. In the Russian tradition, he appears as a devastating conqueror, an instrument of divine punishment, and a «second Batu Khan.» A motif-based comparison focusing on physical disability, youth, the nature of power, and relations with the people demonstrates how the same biographical elements acquire contrasting meanings in different cultural contexts. The article argues that these differences reflect distinct strategies of collective remembrance rather than merely competing interpretations of historical reality. Their systematic nature has shaped the long-term development of Timur's literary image in both traditions.

Резюме. В статье проводится сравнительный анализ формирования образа Амира Темура в узбекской и русской литературе. Исследование основано на произведениях Алишера Навои, древнерусском «Сказании о Темир-Аксаке» и узбекских народных преданиях. С использованием сравнительно-типологического, имагологического подходов и концепции культурной памяти раскрываются две различные модели интерпретации образа Темура. В узбекской литературе он предстает как мудрый правитель, покровитель науки и искусства, а также символ государственности. В русской литературе Темур изображается как завоеватель, орудие Божьего наказания и «второй Батый». Анализ мотивов, связанных с физическим недостатком, молодостью, характером власти и отношениями с народом, показывает, что одни и те же биографические детали приобретают противоположные значения в разных культурных традициях. Делается вывод о том, что эти различия обусловлены особенностями коллективной памяти и культурного восприятия исторической личности.